Outcome of Indo-Bangladesh Talks

973. DR. ARUN KUMAR SHARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the outcome of India Bangladesh official level talks held recently, indicating particulars of issues agreed upon;

(b) the details of agreement on illegal migration and extradition;

(c) whether Bangladesh agreed upon the issues of following India to use the Chittagong Port and water transit; and

(d) if so, particulars thereof; and if not, progress made on the subject?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (d) Foreign Secretary level talks were held between India and Bangladesh on 28-29 June 1998 in Dhaka. The talks covered bilateral relations as well as regional and international matters. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the continued close and friendly relations between the two countries. There was an emphasis on the need to accelerate economic cooperation in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner. Cooperation in other areas of bilateral interaction, including security matters, was also discussed. Both sides reiterated their commitment to developing SAARC as an effective forum for promoting greater regional cooperation.

Home Secretary visited Dhaka for bilateral talks on 20-22 November 1998 and discussed matters related with security, illegal immigration, border management and visa regime. Both sides agreed to share actionable intelligence in order not to allow undesirable elements to use their respective territories for action prejudicial to the security interests of the other. Bangladesh assured that measures will be taken to strengthen security at the border to prevent illegal border crossing.

India-Bangladesh Trade Review talks were held in Dhaka on 8-9 December 1998. Commerce Secretary led the Indian delegation. The talks were extremely positive and both sides discussed a number of issues including cooperation in infrastructure development including rail, road and inland water transport. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the progress of the work on restoration of Jessore-Benapole rail link which is expected to be operational by June 1999. Both sides also agreed on the necessity for linking Akhaura and Agartala by rail.

Indo-British Talk

974. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Minister of External Affairs held wide ranging talks with leaders of the British government recently at London; and

(b) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Minister of External Affairs paid an official visit to the U.K. from 2—7 February 1999. The visit was part of a mutually agreed effort for further development of Indo-U.K. relations and, in particular, to give them the depth and dimension they deserved. For this purpose the Minister held wide ranging talks with the U.K. political leadership. The subjects discussed included, inter-alia, bilateral cooperation, regional developments, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Several exchanges in diverse fields are now envisaged as a follow up.

Infiltration from Bangladesh

975. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) wehther Government are aware that more than 20,000 persons from bangladesh have infiltrated in West Bengal who are putting the West Bengal under strain and also causing both social and economic problem in that State: and